

Plant Fact Sheet

MAXIMILIAN SUNFLOWER *Helianthus maximiliani* *Schrad.*

Plant Symbol = HEMA2

Contributed by: USDA NRCS Plant Materials
Program



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Uses

Helianthus may be used as an ingredient in range seeding mixtures to provide a high quality forage for livestock, and food and cover for wildlife. The plant's long flowering period and spreading habit, along with its tendency to form thickets or large colonies, make it ideal for wildlife food and cover. Livestock, especially sheep and goats, readily eat the forage.

It may be used as a natural hedge or tall screen to block out harsh areas. It also makes a colorful, attractive landscape plant.

It has the potential of being an excellent filter strip plant due to its seemingly great ability to uptake and use excess water and nutrients.

Status

Please consult the PLANTS Web site and your State Department of Natural Resources for this plant's current status (e.g. threatened or endangered species, state noxious status, and wetland indicator values).

Description

Helianthus maximiliani, Maximilian sunflower, is a tall, warm season, spreading, perennial forb which is a member of the true sunflower family. Large, showy, yellow blooms occur throughout the full 5-7 feet height of the plant in great abundance during late summer and fall. During this period, the plant adds a brilliant splash of color and texture to range sites, natural areas, and landscapes.

Adaptation and Distribution

'Aztec' Maximilian sunflower is adapted to the southern 3/4 of Oklahoma and to all parts of Texas, except the Trans-Pecos region. It is adapted to many soil types, from sands to clays. It favors good internal drainage and sunny locations. Excessive long-term wetness or salinity may pose problems with keeping stands. 'Aztec' will perform best in areas receiving 18 inches or more annual precipitation.

'Prairie Gold' is adapted to 14-inch and greater precipitation zones in Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, western Iowa, and Missouri.

For a current distribution map, please consult the Plant Profile page for this species on the PLANTS Website.

Establishment

Seedbed preparation should begin in the late summer or fall prior to a scheduled spring seeding. This will greatly help reduce excessive weed growth. Maximilian sunflower benefits from having a clean weed-free seedbed.

Establish with range seeding mixtures at a rate of 1/4 to 1/2 pounds of seed per acre. If it is to be planted in strips or blocks, plant at a rate of 1 pound of seed per acre. Seed should be placed from 3/8 to 1/2 inch deep. In rows for hedges or screens, plant seed 1/2 to 1 inch apart and thin to 8 inches apart when plants are about 2 inches tall. Allow about 3 feet to each side of planting to allow for plants to spread.

Management

Once established, it will require little maintenance in range seeding situations. Be aware that overgrazing of a range site, in which it is included, will destroy the planting.

Wildlife plots, strips, or hedge plantings may benefit from light applications of fertilizer to sustain production of mature plants. Removal of previous years growth will help initiate early spring growth from dormant below-ground buds.

Pests and Potential Problems

Plants may be susceptible to root rot.

Cultivars, Improved, and Selected Materials (and area of origin)

‘Aztec’ Maximilian sunflower was released from the Knox City (TX) Plant Materials Center in 1978 as a composite of five county collections from different parts of Texas. It was released to provide a widely adapted perennial forb for wildlife and livestock browse.

‘Prairie Gold’ Maximilian sunflower (KS origin) was released in 1978 from the Manhattan (KS) Plant Materials Center in cooperation with the University of Nebraska Horticulture Department. This cultivar has good competitive ability and cold tolerance.

Prepared By & Species Coordinator:

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For more information about this and other plants, please contact your local NRCS field office or Conservation District, and visit the PLANTS Web site <<http://plants.usda.gov>> or the Plant Materials Program Web site <<http://Plant-Materials.nrcs.usda.gov>>

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